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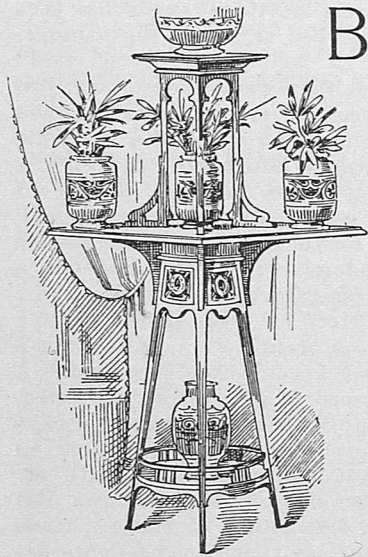
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THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

AMATEUR HOUSE DECORATION.

A PAPER READ BEFORE THE EDINBURGH ARCHITECTURAL ASSOCIATION, BY JOHN MARSHALL, M. A.

PART II.

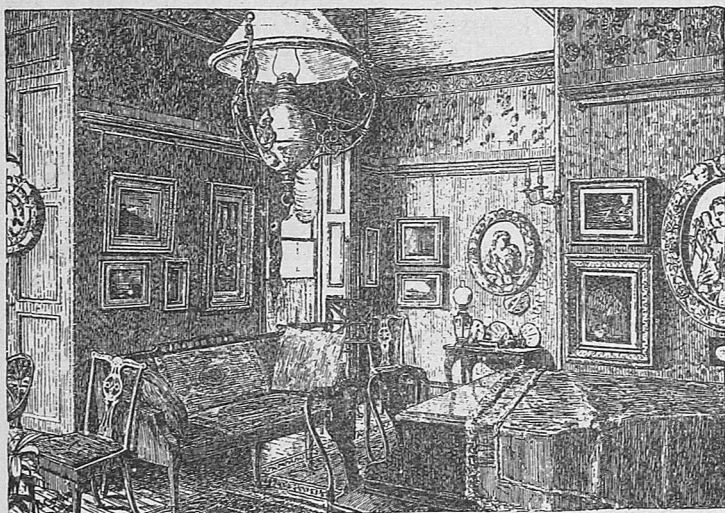


BUT we have wandered far from the little house in London which we left a victim to tradition and common-place. The first vague instincts of personal feeling in regard to one's rooms took the form of a rather restless and seemingly aimless shifting about of the pieces. The round table got successively into every corner of the drawing-room, was finally turned up on its edge, and then shifted out altogether, as useless in a room intended for sitting in. The sideboard was moved into the morning-room and replaced by a dwarf book-case of quite terrific character; carved supports of an aggravated kind, with lions' heads and bulbous fruits, and all

agreeably lacquered over with varnish to the required antique depth. Antimacassars began to disappear as nuisances; the Nottingham lace curtains were replaced by cretonne, and so forth.

The next stage was *china mania*. One began to haunt all kinds of dingy shops; take deep interest in Worcester, and Bow, and Chelsea, and Lowestoft; and the wall above bookcase aforesaid, and up each side of the mantel-glass and elsewhere, began to blossom out in arrays of plates, hung to the walls by nails from which plaster and paper suffered terribly; and *eccentricity* at least was, in some sort attained. I think, however, one got in this way at least a little inkling of that grace in drawing and sweetness of color which much of the china of the last century shared with its other productions. Shepherds and shepherdesses, Neptunes and Venuses, picturesque at least, and not inharmonious in color, began to supplant vases of green Bohemian glass or pale skim-milk-colored porcelain. In short blindly enough, one was feeling after *color*.

Then came the great event—one's introduction to a really beautiful drawing-room, very tiny, but done by an artist. A

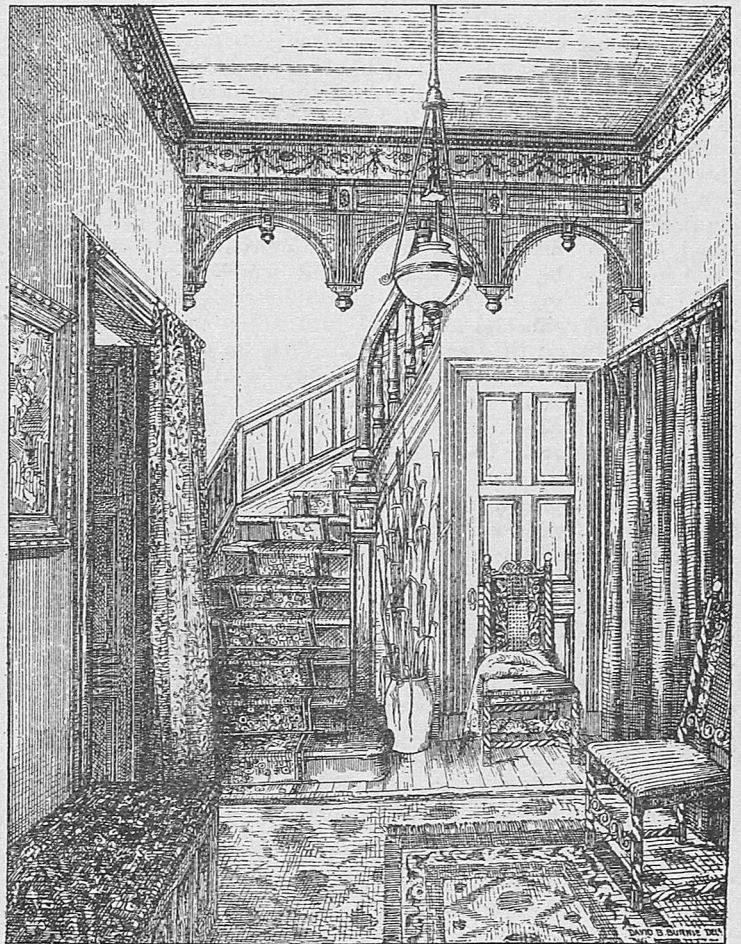


HARMONIZING THE MUSIC ROOM.

little Louis Seize clock, in white and gold, on its bracket; a graceful wooden mantel with its festoons and vases in delicate gray; a Persian carpet on the floor; a pretty oval table with Sheraton legs and shell inlaid, on which was an Oriental vase converted into a lamp; some few Chippendale chairs and couch in delicate bronze velvet; and a little Broadwood grand piano. Walls of French grey and gold picked out in a creamy white,

with some artistic sketches in water and oil here and there, the whole centered by an *escritoire* of Sheraton make, in satinwood. The *tout ensemble* produced such a confusion, such a delightful pell mell of new ideas, as left me nearly dumb with joy as of a new birth.

The separation of so-called high art from the art of the decorator has a ruinous effect on both. Our pictures are poor in style, mean in design, pale and ineffective in color; our furniture and our draperies are ugly and unmeaning. No painter can be a fine painter, in the sense in which Titian, or Veronese, or Reynolds was a fine painter, who is not essentially a decorator, painting with a view to the walls of noble rooms and galleries. No decorator can be a fine decorator who is not essentially an artist, that is, an exponent, through skillful handiwork, of an ideal—of something too great and too deep for words, which unites our souls and bodies with the song of birds, and the bloom of flowers, and all the large magnificence of visible nature. An architect's aim, it seems to me, should be exactly the same in kind with that of the sculptor—to fix noble emotions in noble form; a decorator's should be that of the painter—to express in



GETTING THE HALL IN ORDER

lines and color, in a given space, the passion of mankind, its love and its joy. I do not see where the lines are to be drawn between them. If there is any sacredness in noble flow of line or splendor of color in statue or in painting, there is just the same sacredness in noble design of frieze or column; in splendid harmony of curtains, and carpets and wall paper.

I confess that there are many painters who are content to live and paint among mean and poor surroundings in their own houses, but I do not think that they are really ever great painters. Infallibly, a true colorist in art expands into color in his own dress, his own furniture, his own walls and gardens, as and when he has time, and money, and opportunity. The revolution in our taste of furnishing to day, compared with thirty years ago, is not more obvious than the revolution in art which has made the pictures of Burne-Jones, and Albert Moore, and Orchardson, and Leighton, and Alma Tadema, possible.

And the reason that our landscape art is relatively so poor now, so mean in design, so crude, or so commonplace in coloring is that in it the decorative principle has for a time, especially in England, been overlaid and swamped by a mistaken realism or

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naturalism, the product partly of Ruskin, and partly of photography out of which we may hope it too will in turn emerge.

To put the whole thing in a nutshell, every picture, to be fine, must be a fine piece of decoration, and every fine piece of decoration must be a picture. Unless and until our rooms are so colored and so furnished that they in every part and from every point of view suggest a picture, they are, and must be, failures.

Nor is this in any sense a negation of the claims of utility, but the very strongest affirmation of them. Why is it that our painters are so fond of rustic cottages, and kitchens, and farm-yards, and country gardens? Simply because they are paintable. And why are they paintable? Simply because everything in and about them is suggested by, and has a relation to utility. In the very ugliest and most commonplace house we know, you will be pretty sure to find at least one room that is bright and cheery, and picturesque and that is the kitchen. It is bright because it has a fire constructed for heat and not for show, a fender for use and not for prettiness, chairs for sitting on, shelves on which to put plates, a clock to be seen and heard, bellows hung handy for use, a table bright and clean to put meat on a floor visible and polished for constant cleanliness.

Carry the same principles, *mutatis mutandis*, into your own rooms; in other words let common sense dictate the shape and position, as well as the selection of every article therein, and your rooms will be delightful. And to begin with, what can be more utterly senseless than to have a room, nay, sometimes two rooms, so furnished and colored that you can't afford, and don't intend, to use them at all? It is quite true that many people live in such a plain way, from taste, or economy, that they don't want a drawing-room, so-called. They don't have one. If, instead of two small rooms, one a dining-room, almost entirely filled up with the dining table, round which the family must squat as best they may, and a drawing-room, cold and white, and stiff, and cold, and miserable, into which people are thrust occasionally when they surprise you with an utterly unmeaning afternoon call; if, I say you had one large room, with the dining table at one end; perhaps a curtain draped across the middle the piano and settee, etc., at the other end; and not a single piece of furniture in the rooms but what you mean to use and could use in your daily family life, I say that this one change would help at once to make your home a really beautiful thing. Then frequently there is an odd little room behind the staircase, too small for a sitting-room and unwholesome as a bed-room, with no fireplace in it, with usually two chairs and a bookcase thrust into it, which is called the library. Why not knock down the partition, and throw it into your living room, making it L shaped, adding space, and light, and variety of outline? Often in the same way, there is a dreary little room entering from one side of the narrow and dingy lobby, called a study, or morning room, or what not, and of no use whatever, except to become the real living room, over-crowded and dirty, so that the dining room becomes a dull sham as well as the drawing-room. Why not have down the partition again and throw the whole into a hall, a real hall then, with a cheerful fireplace, and some basket chairs, and a table and magazines—a place to lounge in and enjoy a little variety of life from the narrow confinement of a room? The fact is, our houses have usually far too many small rooms, and a few partitions removed would do more to improve our social life than anything else.

What a thing it would be if, supposing a few friends dropped in of an evening, we could whip the square of carpet or rug from our living-room floor, push back the table, and there, in the warmth and cheerfulness of our ordinary surroundings, have a dance to the piano which was the familiar companion of our daily life, and not a dreary pariah in the cold seclusion of a drawing-room, itself so bespattered with china and settees, and chimney-piece ornaments, that you dare not move in it?

Am I not therefore assuming myself to dictate to others how they must furnish and what they must do? Am I not, therefore, so far as in me lies, interfering with that individuality whose claims I proposed to advocate? In answer I would say that my desire in these remarks is not to lay down a law, but simply to offer illustrations of what I think are certain ways in which individuality may realize itself. There are certain common conditions of existence which dictate certain limits to our conduct, transgression of which becomes mere eccentricity, or insanity. A super-aesthetic person, who declined to have any beds or bedroom ware in his dwelling, or any chairs for visitors to sit on, etc., would be justly laughed at, or locked up.

But what we have to realize is that many things are not necessarily reasonable or convenient, because they are usual or

fashionable, and that within the limits of the reasonable and convenient there is a very wide range of possible variety, which is very slightly occupied in our daily lives. And I have much greater hope of a return to reasonable individuality in our houses, than in our (and still more in ladies) mode of dressing. Out-door dress, at least must very largely conform to prevalent tastes, or we should make ourselves the butt of all kinds of ridicule and even danger. But even in dress I believe that a greater approach to comfort and real individual needs has been recently attained than we have reached as yet in the arrangement of our houses.

It may be argued by some that they want a best room, just as they want a best suit of clothes, for special occasions, and that they cannot afford to use such a room constantly, and yet do not see the way to dispense with it altogether. But even if this be admitted I would urge that this is no reason for the arrangement of such a room being essentially commonplace and uncomfortable. It is no reason for such a room being staring white and gold, with great windows everywhere, and not a particle of shadow anywhere, the poor fragments of such a thing being hunted out carefully by mirrors at every point, causing confusion and distraction to eye and brain.

An illustration of this occurred in our own experience. A large pier glass which we had learned to detest was converted, simply enough, into two long upright ones, which we have found useful, though not in the position for which at first we imagined them most suitable. As it happened, the breadth exactly fitted the two spaces on either side of a bow window. But on being set up there, the total destruction of shadow made them quite intolerable. And I may say that our experience has led us to formulate the general maxim. Whenever a piece of furniture seems, by its size and shape, "just made" for some recess of clearly defined space, don't put it there. No space, in in other words, ought ever to be blocked.

Reception-rooms in old times were places of repose, and dignity, and grandeur in color, and lighting, and design. The furniture was fine rather than abundant, the lighting was subdued, the floor was easily cleared. We may do well to imitate our forefathers in their simplicity and common sense, even if variety of tastes and habits prescribe variety of means for their realization. If people are fond of music, and desire their drawing-room to be mainly a music-room, let the piano be a prominent object in the room; do not smother the floor with thick carpets to deaden the sound; do not overcrowd your space so that the musicians cannot get room to play. If you want it as a reading-room, have your lights convenient in position and structure to enable you to read; do not insist on having a blaze of light in parts of the room where no one ever cares to sit. Nothing is more restful than shade in its proper amount and place. Have suitable accommodation for your books and papers, bookcases if you like, writing tables of real utility, everything convenient for your purpose. If you have a fine view from one of your windows, keep your glass clear where the view can be seen; but do not imagine that every window should have plate glass all over, even if it looks out on a backyard. If the view is not beautiful try to make the window itself beautiful instead.

Let the same common sense govern your decision as to the ornamentation of your rooms. It is natural for us to like to have gay things about us, but my notion is that our rooms will look nice in proportion as we get our gaiety and sparkle out of our utilities and certainly not out of their negation. If we like carvings, don't let us have bits of carving unmeaningly stuck about our walls, but see that our chairs and cabinets are themselves fine specimens of carving.

Do we like the color of brass? then let us have brass fenders and fire-irons, brass handles on our doors, brass spill-boxes on our mantelpieces, a brass fire-grate if you like, a brass coal-scuttle. Not great sconces of modern stamped rubbish, or brass plates hanging where they obviously are not wanted.

Do we like fine colored draperies? then let the coverings of our couches be of the finest Oriental stuffs; let our doors be hung with tapestry, or old Italian damask portières; let our windows be gracefully draped with some material worth looking at. Don't let us smother our mantelpieces in draperies to catch the dust, or perhaps the fire. Don't stick antimacassars about to tumble into confusion every time one sits down, or be hauled about at an unfortunate gentleman's button.

Do we like flowers? then let us have them, in stands reasonably strong enough to support them; or dotted here and there in vases not too valuable to be risked in holding them. And do not, for any sake, permit ghastly imitations of flowers in com-

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mon Berlin wool work to make your chairs and footstools hideous.

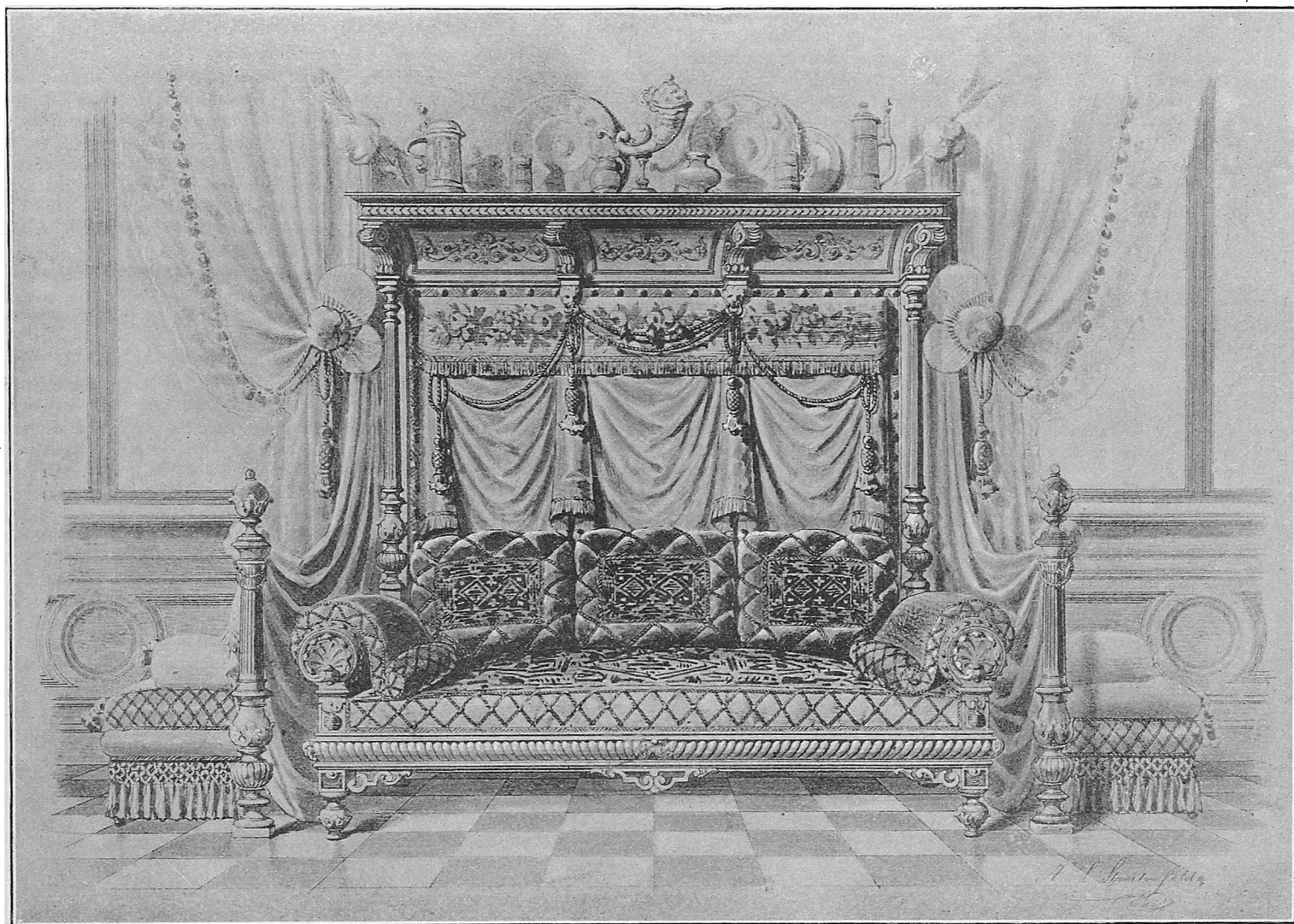
Do you like pretty china? then take suggestions from your own kitchen, where even the common delft looks beautiful, and have your china on reasonable shelves, or in cabinets or in corner cupboards—not plastered against the wall by unseen fastenings, or even as I have seen it, stuck upon doors,

Do you like pictures? then buy good ones, and when you have bought them, hang them where they can be seen, on a level with the eye, and show their attachment to the rods which supports them. Do you like daylight in your rooms? then don't smother up your windows in great clumsy valances and straight falling curtains, and then try to compensate for the gloom by leaving your walls in pale distemper, on which every picture and bit of furniture looks spotty. Let your curtains be so draped that during the day they are hoisted up clear or nearly clear of the windows, forming a graceful series of curves about them; and then at night when the light is gone, have them let down to

A DIVAN IN THE RENAISSANCE STYLE FOR A RECEPTION ROOM.

ON this page we give an admirable suggestion of a rich and elegant sofa, or divan, in the Renaissance style that would add dignity to a large reception room. A simple seat does not of itself possess the effect that such a construction as that here presented will command, and the idea is one that will interest our readers quite as much as the manufacturers of fine furniture.

A high cornice behind the seat, supported by its pillars, is decorated with an arrangement of draperies. The top of the construction is decorated with vases, plaques and tankards, and the *ensemble* conveys the idea of a democratic throne, or a place where the host and his most distinguished guest will receive the homage of their friends. In a republican society like ours this much of style is permissible, and the idea is one well worth the attention of enterprising manufacturers.



A RENAISSANCE DIVAN—A SUGGESTION FOR A RECEPTION ROOM.

make the room look cosy. Then when you have thus got as much light as you want, let it fall on something worth while. On lovely interchange of flowing line and gorgeous color in wall papers, and couches, and rugs; on fine bits of brass work, and china, and mirrors, each placed in its own appropriate spot; on rooms that speak of a kindly real life spent in them, of happy day and merry evenings, with the slowly accumulating memories of human existence not unwisely realized therein.

(To be continued.)

REEDED, convex or half-round forms applied to a flat or curved surface, producing the reverse effect of "fluting;" some of the columns in Egyptian architecture represent a reeded appearance, being literally sculptured to represent a bundle of reeds tied together.

RADIATION, is a principle illustrated to a great extent in Nature, and is of several kinds, such as radiation from a point, from a vertical line, and from a horizontal line. The law of tangential growth as seen in most plants, where the minor stems and leaves spring from the parent stem, is a species of radiation, and is important in the construction of scrolls and similar ornament.

In plants of horizontal growth and in umbelliferous plants, the spiral lines in shells, the primary feathers of a bird's wing, the fingers in the human hand, are amongst the subjects that illustrate radiation from a point. The secondary feathers in the wing of a bird radiate from the horizontal line of the humerus bone.

The so-called honeysuckle ornament, or anthemions of the Greeks, afford good illustrations of radiation, and they are always finer in style when they radiate more from a horizontal line than from a single point; the leading lines, pipes and ribs of acanthus foliage, as seen in the capitals of columns and pilasters, radiate mostly in this way.